

## **FaDSS CONCEPT PAPER**

### **History**

During its 1988 legislative session, the Iowa General Assembly established a Family Development and Self-Sufficiency (FaDSS) Council to study, fund and evaluate programs which provide developmental services to families who are at risk of long-term welfare dependency. The FaDSS Council allocates funds to grantees across the state. Each FaDSS grantee is given flexibility in designing programs that best respond to the unique needs of its community. Initially, seven three-year demonstration grants were awarded, with program services beginning in early 1989. In 1990, FaDSS became a support service of the PROMISE JOBS program and, by 1993, FaDSS was an ongoing Iowa program. In FY00 the FaDSS program was available in all of Iowa's 99 counties. Program has evolved over the years. In FY01, the legislature made FaDSS staff as mandatory reporters. FY08, the legislature changed the responsibility of the FaDSS program in Iowa Code from Department of Human Services to Department of Human Rights. In FY10, the program increased intensity of home visits when a family begins the program. Families receive a minimum of two visits for the first three months of service. Increased accountability in supervision was also part of the changes this year. In FY12, the program implemented requirements for staffing. Staff are required to go through a criminal and child abuse background check prior to hire and every two years after. In addition, supervisors were required to meet a minimum educational standard. In FY13, additional program and organizational standards were implemented to enhance FaDSS.

### **Program Design**

The FaDSS program basic design recognizes that at-risk families face many issues and respond well to long term, intense personal interaction with trained staff to move to emotional and economic independence. FaDSS believes that families can become strong, self-sufficient community members through voluntary participation in the array of individualized services that FaDSS programs offer.

FaDSS develops a comprehensive system of support services for each family. The services are provided in a manner that promotes, empowers, and nurtures the family to self-sufficiency and healthy reintegration into the community. FaDSS emphasizes the strengths of families and builds upon those strengths, assisting families to set and attain goals, while recognizing that families seek to address their multiple needs in a way that least threatens the integrity of the family unit.

This strong belief in the family unit is the foundation of the Certified Family Development Specialist's partnership with each family. This belief leads each grantee to tailor the design of program services to best meet the needs expressed by each family in a manner most comfortable to the family. As such, each grantee's services are unique, but the following core components are consistent in all grantee programs.

## CORE SERVICE COMPONENTS

**HOME VISITS** are the foundation for all FaDSS services. During these visits a trusting relationship is fostered between the FaDSS Specialist and each family member. The home visits continue until the family requests them to end or until three months after the family is no longer receiving cash assistance from the Family Investment Program (FIP). Families receive a minimum of two home visits per month for the first three months and a minimum of monthly thereafter.

**ASSESSMENT** is an intense self-reflection process that is completed with each family. The assessment tools that may be used are the genogram (family tree), ecomap (depicts family support system) time line (significant events), and a basic strengths assessment. All families are assessed using the FaDSS Self-Sufficiency Matrix. Other Assessments may be used depending on the specific criteria outlined in the grantee application or the families' unique situation.

**GOAL SETTING** is directed by the family with guidance from the Family Development Specialist. The family develops long term goals in conjunction with their Family Investment Agreement (FIA) goals developed with PROMISE JOBS. FaDSS also helps the family set short-term goals that will lead to the achievement of their long-term goal of achieving economic self sufficiency.

**SUPPORT** by the Family Development Specialist is ongoing, strength-based and solution focused.

**REFERRAL** by the Family Development Specialist assists the families in accessing community resources to better meet their needs.

**ADVOCACY** is performed at first by the Family Development Specialist and later, as they become empowered, by the family to ensure that systems and services are equitable, inclusive and responsive.

**SPECIAL NEEDS** funds may be provided by the FaDSS program (where available), when no other resources exist in the community.

**GROUP ACTIVITIES** (where available) are offered as a means of breaking isolation, encouraging networking, and reintegrating families into the community.

## **CORE PROGRAM COMPONENTS OF FaDSS**

### **Staffing**

Family Development Specialists and their Supervisors are certified through a training program that has been approved by the Family Development and Self-Sufficiency Council.

- In addition to the required educational qualifications for supervisors, FaDSS grantees have the flexibility to develop additional staff qualifications that reflect their localized design.
- Grantees maintain a high level of professional development through the Iowa Community Action Association, the Iowa Family Development Alliance and other state, national, regional and local training opportunities. In addition to the Family Development Certification Training, FaDSS has implemented a set of required trainings for staff including confidentiality, ethics, mandatory reporter, and the Self-Sufficiency Matrix. Staff are also to attend 10 hours of training each year.
- In addition to Family Development Specialists, FaDSS grantees have the flexibility to access specialized staff. They have developed programs with staff that include a psychotherapist, nurse, career counselor, employment specialist, mentor program director, youth-school liaison and activities coordinator.

### **Program Capacity**

The complex nature of the FaDSS program and the multiple issues faced by families volunteering for FaDSS services necessitate that programs limit their capacity to a range of 18 to 21 families on average per full time Specialist.

### **Community Linkages**

Beyond formal linkage with the PROMISE JOBS program, FaDSS grantees have developed local community linkages with other area resource providers in addition to participating on local advisory boards, coordinating committees, etc.